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departure

A MAGAZINE OF LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

Editors :

JOHN ADLARD . ALAN BROWNJOHN

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ONE SHILLING

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DEPARTURE

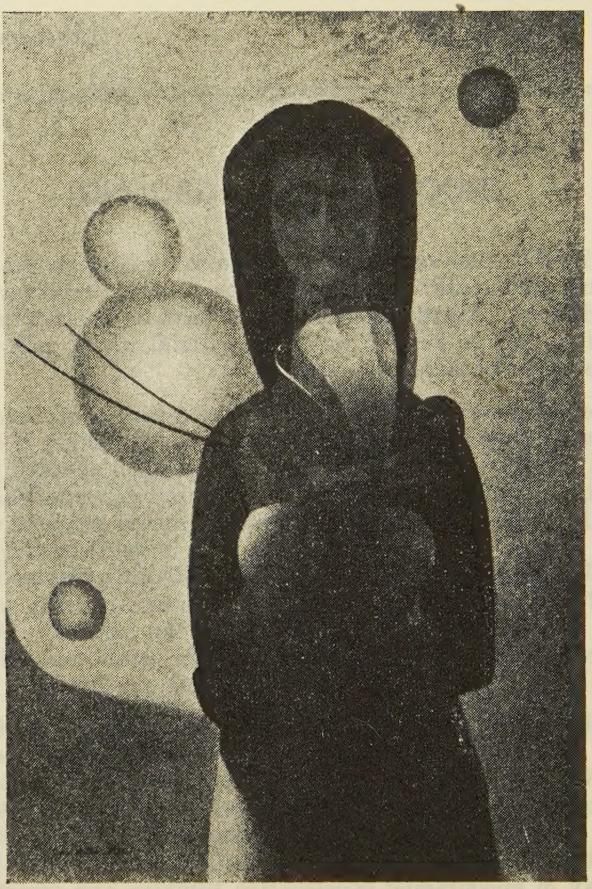
VOLUME ONE NUMBER THREE

CHOOSING OUR GROUND

DEPARTURE, now one year old, cannot be deaf to the chorus of sardonic comments on a literary scene cluttered with reviews of all shapes and sizes. A little magazine must have its due mixture of pride and humility, and as long as we have material which may please our readers we shall continue to appear.

We believe that in this number we have a variety of material which will appeal to a wide audience. In our first section are poems and a story from Oxford writers, and work by established poets of note. One of the latter, Norman Nicholson, has sent us his poem *Hosea*, which shows us his first thoughts on the Old Testament prophet who is the subject of his new verse play. The play, to be performed by the New Pilgrim Players, is called *A Match for the Devil*. The second group consists of more experimental poems from three American writers who have been widely published on both sides of the Atlantic. And we are happy also to print a painting by Oscar Mellor, artist and editor, whose "Fantasy Poets" series will be familiar to our readers.

Yet there is a further justification for the existence of the little magazine. This is a time when the most widely noticed artistic "judgments" are those made on what they do not attempt to understand by national dailies, radio quiz panels, backbench politicians and the like. While the influential literary journals of wide circulation can be counted on the fingers of one hand, the little magazine has its humble part to play in encouraging constructive thinking and sincere creative purpose among its own smaller public. We feel that it can best do this by steering between the two extremes which have claimed so many little reviews—esotericism in choice of material or critical approach on the one hand, and complete neutrality about artistic issues on the other. We thus prefer to remain eclectic in our selection, while reserving the right to censure (or reject, if we receive it) whatever is bloodless, insincere, unconsidered, or negative in conception. For the first and best precaution to be taken by one who is defending his art or his appreciation against its louder critics is that afforded by choosing his ground carefully.



'THE INSECT GUARDIAN'
painting by Oscar Meller.

JOHN HEATH-STUBBS

Court Poet

On a hot afternoon the Grand Illustrous Bard
Walked in a pleasure-garden of the Summer Palace,
Waiting for a directive from his Imperial Lord;
Eunuchs and beccaficoes twittered in the green alleys.

The period was sufficiently romantic and remote—
In Pekin, or Byzantium, or Ispahan—
Where the poet ranked with the Keeper of the Sacred Goat,
Soothsayers, illusionists, and other professional men.

He was proficient in his art; well-equipped to cater
For every taste, he could immortalize,
With elaborate rhetoric and difficult metre,
The flicker of a lady's eyelid, or the fall of a rose

A faint wind stirred in the magnolia boughs;
The petals dropped, dropped. The afternoon was long.
A caged nightingale sang from a summer-house;
He paused to listen awhile. He could interpret the song.

"Go, poet," sang that seductive bird,
"The door of your cage is open, and you were born free.
To hop here on a golden perch is absurd;
Go back to where you belong, to the forest tree."

No time for second thoughts. He would not stay:
He pawned his Court uniform of gold-embroidered silk,
And retired to a mountain hut three thousand miles away,
To live on boiled potatoes and goat's milk—

Which imprudent gesture he never ceased to regret;
It could not, of course, be overlooked by his betters.
He died of under-nourishment and of debt,
And is chiefly remembered for his poignant *Suppliant Letters*.

NORMAN NICHOLSON

Hosea

Love, that on a mattress cuddles all
The wooden legs and false teeth of the world;
That presses a possessive mouth on small
White ulcers and children who tell lies;
Love, that can never know pity, for pity is known
    From the pain in another's eyes,
And all pain is always love's own—
    Take to itself this man
    Who beneath scouring skies
Stares through the split rocks at a far town.

He sees no more the kisses, the torn gown,
    The stains on the steps of the altar,
But in a testament of driven sand
        He reads the need
    For the accepted shame, the price
In silver and barley and unfertile years:
'For I have desired mercy and not sacrifice.'
He roofs blurred eyes with a dry, cracking hand—
His righteous anger cuckolded by tears.

SYDNEY TREMAYNE

Downland

The sea laid this land down. Chalk track and thorn
Over the swell and fall of downland tell
More truth than upstart orchards, orderly,
Man-mustered to stiff rule. Unmastered still,
A land of flint and scrub with a sea roll
Under its stubby churches, this can slip
Further than memory. Look where it lifts
Its cottage ships towards the sky's long rim
Surely to swallow them, yet is so slow
Oaks grow and crumble on the sloping waves
That never break, dry roothold for the whin.
Many lie drowned here in the shape of sea
Whom no tide moves. The mole tunnels in sand,
The plough's keel bucks on stones, a wake of gulls
Streams white behind the firm wave-walking plod
That bears a man across pre-Domesday depths
Unreckoning what wreckage clarts his heels.
He will not hear the grinding undertow
When waves run through the corn. A mouldered oar
Shall sprout him harvest bread. Whose threadbare sail
Break into surf of blossom he'll not know.

GEORGE MACBETH

The Greek Girl

The centaur rapes her with his marble hooves
Where stone colliding pauses into art.
She grips the cold archaic smile whose grooves
Once held the perfect lips, now prised apart.

Fighting him back, she meets the drill, and moves,
The point of Realism piercing heart.
Through arcs of novelty her form approves
The canons of the classical new start.

Bulged eye-balls and the cut-back cheeks are gone.
Snail hair uncurls, plain drapery goes drifting,
Rich in precision, to the bloodless don.

Yet still the shattered kore smiles, uplifting
Her lacquered hand. Olympia looks on,
Past liquored lapiths, at the quicksands shifting.

ANTHONY THWAITE

A Poem on making

Returning from parting, I discovered swans
Under the bridge, meeting and parting
In narrow water: and I thought how once
This would have been an elegiac thing,
The discovered symbol and the image one
On such a day, parting from such a one.

Returning to my room, where poems bred
In corners and in books, the dual rhymes
Would meet, like swans, and bicker in my head
Over the narrow river. Poems gleam
Under the shallows where the word must fail
Because the image falls and is too frail.

Swans on the water move like thoughts, we know,
And thoughts glide on the waters of a dream:
Yet in the poems' archipelago
Islands and water, swans and feathers come
Together only in the single view
Caught by the eye which tells them they are true

Returning now, the parting like the long
Sustained and obvious metaphor I caught
Below me in the river, my head sang
Along the pavement of this banal thought—
That swans may part, and yet may be
Transmuted only by that ecstasy
Which the heart prizes, and may not deny.

"TOWARDS SILENCE"

by J. S. Bingham

THE Spiral rose from an asphalt plain, a sweeping band of steel swirling and disappearing into the upper air. Beside the spiral was a hemisphere of pale grey glass.

There were four hundred and fifty men trudging steadily four abreast up the Spiral. None of them knew exactly where they were going. Their only certainty was their world of glass, asphalt and steel. Even their leader, Sigmund, with the golden hair, the blue eyes and slender body of a Nordic, only knew that they must find what lay at the end of the Spiral.

They had been walking many hours now, and were almost level with the highest point of the Hemisphere. Some of the men immediately behind Sigmund were already very tired, but they were quite unable to relax their pace owing to the determined pressure of the others. Grimly they marched onwards, their eyes fixed firmly on the never-ending sweep of the Spiral. An hour passed. And another.

Finally, one man shouted to Sigmund, "For God's sake, Sigmund, let's stop and take a five minute break. I'm dog tired. We all are."

"Of course you're tired," was the reply, "But if we keep stopping we'll *never* get to the end of the Spiral."

The retort silenced them for a time, but not for long.

Another cried, "We must *rest*, Sigmund!"

"No. If you sit down to rest, the others will walk over you and trample you to death."

"Nonsense, Sigmund."

"Oh yes. They would like to get to the end of the Spiral first."

"In that case we'll merely stop and remain standing."

Sigmund shook his head. Others joined fiercely into the argument until it became quite clear that the men directly behind him were unanimously in favour of a short rest.

Grudgingly Sigmund gave the order to halt. Immediately there was confusion. Those in front struggled furiously to maintain their position, whilst those behind pressed forward, unable to understand but determined to get to the end of the Spiral. The congestion was worst a quarter way down the column. At this point the tired minority met the full force of the majority surging upwards.

It was here that Albrecht fell off the Spiral.

At once resistance broke, and the column renewed its steady march. But all eyes were on Albrecht as he drifted away. Poor Albrecht. He writhed and twisted in the air and his scream dissolved into silence. It was quite useless. Gently and inevitably he was drawn towards the Hemisphere. The others watched horrified as Albrecht approached and landed on the pale grey glass. He lay on his back, his limbs working furiously. Then he lay still.

"You're pretty sorry now you wanted your five minute break?" said Sigmund. There was no reply.

Painfully they struggled on. For them there was no change, no

variation; there was only the broad, steel sweep of the Spiral, the asphalt plain beneath, and the Hemisphere of cold grey glass.

But the men in front were becoming more and more tired. Ceaselessly driven forward, they knew very well that if they allowed themselves to collapse from exhaustion they would be trampled upon and kicked off the edge of the Spiral. Their nerves and bodies were at breaking point.

A man cried out, "Sigmund!"

"Yes?"

"I don't believe there *is* an end to the Spiral!"

The others shuddered. They too had been thinking this.

"What's your solution?" asked Sigmund.

"We'll go on and on, and sooner or later we'll collapse and that will be the end. We must, we must get back to the beginning of the Spiral. We know that exists."

"Excellent. And how exactly do you think we'll manage that? The men behind are going to be pretty bloody pleased, aren't they?"

"I see no real trouble there. We'll merely pass the word down the column that at a given signal everyone will turn back. You will then give the word, Sigmund. I'm willing to admit that there may be a handful of fanatics who'll want to continue, but remember, Sigmund, they'll be pushing up, and we'll be pushing down. They won't stand a chance; and they won't risk falling off the Spiral."

"What do the rest of you think?"

They shouted their approval.

"All right," said Sigmund, "Go ahead."

Rapidly the word was passed back, and after a reasonable interval Sigmund gave the order. But a tight little group of men near the centre of the column had refused to pass on the word. They were now to regret it. Two hundred men bore down on them and like chaff they were swept off the Spiral. They floated away towards the Hemisphere. Panic struck the column. Those below struggled to retain their position against the pressure from above. At the point where the two groups met, a frenzied battle began. In all directions men spilled over the edge of the Spiral. Madly they fought together. Some were struck down and kicked over the edge. Some were borne away by pressure of numbers. One threw out his arms as he fell and managed to hang on precariously. Not for long, for his fingers were stamped upon.

More than a hundred men had already left the Spiral, and they were slowly and inevitably drifting towards the Hemisphere. Twisting and turning in the air, many struggled frantically to fight their way back. There were two who had left the Spiral locked in each others arms and they still fought furiously. Others calmly aquiesced and glided away still as swans.

Soon the Hemisphere was dotted with men like flies on a windowpane. They twitched and lay still.

The column was dwindling fast. There were now scarcely a hundred left. They fought indiscriminately, for they had lost all sense of reality. Steadily their numbers diminished. Eighty, fifty, twenty,

ten; until of the original column only Sigmund and a swarthy powerful man remained. Grimly they struggled, and then Sigmund took his opponent by the waist and threw him from the Spiral.

Sigmund was alone. The Spiral was his. For some time he stood quite, still, with his legs apart and his arms hanging limply by his sides. Then, very slowly, he sat down, and drew his knees to his chest. How unhappy he was; how very lonely. As he looked down at his men clustered on the Hemisphere, his eyes glistened and two tears ran down his cheeks. He buried his face in his hands.

Finally Sigmund stood up. He gazed at the sweeping Spiral above him and at the asphalt plain below. Then he sighed. Moving to the edge of the Spiral, he flung out his arms, and dived with the grace of a swallow towards the Hemisphere.

JENNY JOSEPH

Sunday Outing

I was to show you the sights
So we started early one indifferent morning.
It was more usual to look first at the mill,
Passing the view from the cliffs go down to the wreck,
The underground passage, and finally the castle.
But maybe it was raining and visitors scarce
And we in Winter had dropped our showmanship habits
For this day, I remember, we went straight to the castle.
We did the architecture fairly thoroughly.
Certainly a staircase or two had to be missed
(And the room with no furnishings now but the afternoon sunlight,
Of no special style)—you must never tire the guest:
But most of the fitted locks slid smoothly back
In total surrender of key to the conqueror.
We looked out of windows normally never uncurtained
And the rocks showed a dazzling white edge down in the bay.

To drag you beyond the wall to the patch where my mind
Could bestow primroses, but you only see nettles
And bits of brown glass, was unprofessional.
Through your waiting stare I saw the foolish betrayal;
Realised I valued more the glass in the sunlight,
Would leave dear relics for somebody else to buy.
And casual and sudden slip out of the holiday season.

An indifferent morning in that abortive Summer
We shut the place that would welcome a permanent guest
Not tolerate possession. And I journeyed inland.

ELIZABETH BARTLETT

David in Roma

David in Roma, under the gilded tree,
Turns a pale face to me,
From a Christmas which has gone,
But is here always.
Photographed in Roma, forever forlorn,
Forever four years old, he
Looks out coldly, grown
Grave and remote, sitting alone,
Hand upon knee, then, now,
Under the bough
Of his Christmas tree.

Now in the streets of Rome the children run,
Now in Regents Park the creak of hoop, the click of gun,
And the bleating doll cries ma-ma, spinning a cry
Between London and Rome, faster than his aeroplane can fly,
Cries ma-ma ma-ma under the frowning sky,
Between the naked trees, along the paths, here where no sun
Breaks through, and there, where the children run
With David in Roma.

Is the Spring early in Rome?
Tell me, does the dome
Of St. Peter's shine like the dome
Of St. Pauls?
For you, the morning walk
Must be taken somewhere; but not here,
And the games and the talk
Must be in one language or another,
Out in the street, out in the via,
At one time or another,
There or here.

No one walks in the park when the sour fog swirls.
This is no weather for boys and girls
To come out to play at birth and death; the child
Who dies on the green battlefields of St. Pancras, the child
With a baby for each lived year, like a mild
Victorian mama, feeling the china skull beneath the curls;
They are all at home till the grass is dry and the fog unfurls,
Like a day in Roma.

David in Roma, David in Rome,
David in London, David at home,
Over the mountain and over the sea,
The Pope can dance with my Lady Lee.
O-U-T spells out,
And out goes he.

GEOFFREY HILL

The Bidden Guest.

The starched unbending candles stir
As though a wind had caught their hair,
As though the surging of a host
Had charged the air of Pentecost.
And I believe in the spurred flame,
Those racing tongues, but cannot come
Out of my heart's unbroken room;
Nor feel the lips of fire among
The cold light and the chilling song,
The broken mouths that spill their hoard
Of prayer like beads onto a board.
There, at the rail, each muffled head
Swings sombrely. O quiet deed.
This is the Breaking of the Bread:
On this the leanest heart may feed
When by the stiffly-linened priest
All wounds of light are newly dressed,
Healed by the pouring-in of wine
From bitter-as from sweet-grapes bled.
But one man lay beneath his vine
And, waking, found that it was dead.
And so my heart has ceased to breathe
(Though there God's worm blunted its head
And stayed.) And still I seem to smile.
Wounds have thick lips and do not tell
If there is blackness couched beneath.
"Yet there are wounds, unquenched with oil,
And blazing eyes that would compel
Evil to turn, though, like a mole
It dug blind alleys down the soil."
So I heard once. But now I hear,
Like shifted blows on my numb back,
A grinding heel; a scraped chair;
The heart's tough shell is still to crack
When, spent of all its Wine and Bread,
Unwinkingly the Altar lies
Wreathed in its sour breath; cold and dead. . . .
A server has put out its eyes. . . . . .

GILLIAN CRAIG

In The Library

A bell tolling
And the sound of wood pigeons.
Vergili Opera page three.
You will receive
Sun-lit messages
From his heart.
So spread your wings
Your strong-seamed sails
To the deep.
A bell tolling
And the sound of wood pigeons.
'Tua cura, palumbes.'

LOTTE ZURNDORFER

Poem for Helen Baker

Death is a dying,
We have no metaphysics here.
When she cries and you say to her
"Only that body is lying still,

"His soul was like a bird,
It flew out", she to the window-sill
Turning has nothing in her heart
To take your meaning, says, "I love that

"Body, it was angular once
But old it was shoddy,
I gave that old man great care
When his skin was shabby

'And his hair no gleaming feather
To trap that loving bird inside
Which clapped his eyes, flapped his hands
Like wings; for love of him, stayed;

"Which, God knows, in rare and thinning air
And larking, rose, and would not fly lower
But for blood-pressure,
And later I loved him more.

"That bird must be dead as the bone,
And the marrow out of mine
Is like an ointment over
Him, I am like a grave-stone."

CHRIS BJERKNES

Who do the dead mourn ?

Am I of the dead,
the silhouette of soul, my flesh
loud mutterer in my own dread
between the streets of leaves,
the glass of frost,
quills snapped in my bleeding
throat,
where is the calm, the absence
of divine violence, violence
of crowded men, opening
the sheaves of thought
in the spongy time of war
when the mind looks frivolously to what it
had before,

these children driven
to stone, lying alone
on the sidewalk of their own bones, cannot hear me
simple pawing of the mind,
merely, like the heron in the mud
simple attitude to the moist winds with her
the modern mood toward
indulgences of war, is there nothing more
profound than the
terror to those who have nothing to pain
sip the sense, the sullen
laments sown upon the sodden flesh, and soil,
am I of the dead, the shallow
in its mute violence real, am I of

the laughing dead, like the moon that had
caressed us, the scarab light blown, that had
uncoiled, the wind blown through
the yawning mouths that shall never
close,
with strict names, and casual listings
autumn is here where the memories
rot, the tumours of
the dead in brutal apostrophes of flesh,

fingers scraping the darkness of the blind
the sordid dark, the sun with
its naked food dripping blood

leaps on the pin point time
and each war dilutes the nation's blood
herding despair
is there nothing more
that the flesh shall leap and leave
the shadow, vague caress as the wind
draws back the dripping curls of war
and violent Venus smears his lips with love,
the dusty silhouette unmoored
from my side, or I from it?

SEYMOUR GRESSER

Mirrors in the Sun

XII. To Hart Crane

For those who look
Or still bear fins,
and not forgotten of their gills. .
in the spool of his hands
when decision was slow,
the cap-to-flask finality that knew
love rears a most proud flesh in darkness.

And in the light, how much more bitter
myth breaks down and cries soft as a feather,
in praise and curse, prayer and cutlass
love cuts down the music-blinded flute,
sounds of prophecy, visions. . . they also swim
down to the sea, anchor to clams
and wait their death
like the constant dark statue or a river,
and the small, nameless eternities of tide
that snap like dogs at unfamiliar shores.

JAMES BOYER MAY

Mid-Passage Harbourings

Trepidation weights all anchors
bounden-dutied by what debts of
consciences at ports of past regard.
There seems no lifting one of these;
    yet, each morning wakened
by vague murmurs of dark ocean—
surface-calm, and heaving sad
from memories of deep storms past . . .
    how might have braved them, this
    tight craft or that . . . . while
those others ventured, lost, and left
such nervous logbooks to be read.

SEYMOUR GRESSER

The Forty-Day Legend

Day I.

Hide love in a honey nettle, the ship is come,
load sand until the beach is barren
and the last bone bundled into dream.
Tell the captain it is glass, not God
glittering from the pulsed drum sun
and filled with faith of the primal thumb
    to the gel, living plasm, to the myth
    that turns hearts counter on the clock. . .
    is heavy—this sea-heart salting of love,
and I breathe only by sail going
through full hold in the wheel spinning ship,
and the ghost of oar creaking bone and galley wrist
waits the flood wind
    and fingers like a compass poise
    the nettle holding of my age.

    Not in a sting chastize the heart
fastened to the porthole a sea-sky splitting bone
and the cannibal sextant stills from the marrowed down living,
I will cry to the captain from my burial ocean
the only fluid faith I can remember.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Denton Welch Journals: ed. *Jocelyn Brooke*

Hamish Hamilton, 15/-

"'GOOD luck,' I said heartily, thinking to myself, 'We'll never see each other again, we'll both grow older and older and uglier and uglier; the earth will bloom, the hops bristle and curl, when we'll both be too disgusting to think of. And when we're dead other young men will meet casually and talk and part. It's all too never-ending for words. I felt hard and sore-hearted and battered about."

Denton Welch, in this comment on a casual meeting in the Kent hop-fields, states what was really the main theme and burden of his short life—the transience and the beauty and the sadness of man, both in his other human contacts and in the vanity of everything he makes. Isolated first by his artistic loneliness and second by his crippling illness, he felt constantly this sense of human futility. It is unreal to comment profusely on the particular encounters with young and handsome men, as so many writers on Welch have done, for although these encounters are described with an ecstasy which Welch usually reserved for his 'things' alone—the beautiful and trivial objects with which he surrounded himself—'homosexual' is too superficial a label for the fierce energy of life which one sees in all his writing. In his novel 'A Voice through a Cloud', for instance, he falls into a reverie of happiness: "A picture formed of the whole world passing over a curved marble bridge—the people snatching at branches, picking up bright stones, laughing, singing, throwing back their hair, striving after joy through every catastrophe." This 'striving after joy' is an ironical comment on Welch's own life, a life which was largely retarded and confined by the memories of childhood and adolescence, yet which strove through thirteen years of cruel illness to express itself in many ways—paintings, drawings, book-illustrations, poems, short-stories, novels and the Journals themselves. He was prolific, and he worked with that sense of urgency which one always associates with the sick—Keats, D. H. Lawrence, Katherine Mansfield. One is constantly finding throughout the Journals lists of work accepted, work in progress, work commissioned, yet always with some variation on the comment — 'Not enough time, not enough time.'

Perhaps because of this obsessional racing against time, he never seems to have been troubled about the *value* of his work—whether it was lasting or not — but mainly whether it was *sincere*; he seemed always to be feeling that a tangle of imprecision was forming round him as he wrote: "Writing is everything but the reality. Heavy as mud, powdery as meringue, silvered all over with clouding slime—everything true escaping underneath the words, like insects scuttling away . . ." It was not that he didn't want greatness. He enjoyed—and yet was almost always disturbed by—adulation. But the real power of his life lay in a feverish, hyper-sensitive withdrawal, which was the source of

much that was precious in his work as a painter and designer and much that was hysterical in his poetry, but which found its real medium in the clarity (both of style and vision) of his prose. There is a quality about this which it is difficult to define: often it is the vivid, hothouse writing of a precocious and sheltered boy of twelve, especially in his descriptions of material things—food, pottery, even the external features of people. He had the eye for minute detail of a young numismatist or butterfly-collector, that sense of carefully hoarded impressions and tiny joys hugged closed. With most boys, this sense, like a child's natural gift in painting, dies with adolescence. But Welch, never fitted for a normal life mentally, and by his accident in adolescence forced into physical abnormality, kept, and perhaps encouraged, the faculty. Undoubtedly this talent was as limited as it was intense, but within his own limits he was a very perfect artist. A flower at the window, a Mongolian ring, a doll's house, the texture of a man's skin, even the morning hospital 'specimen', amber and translucent in the sunlight by his bed (for Welch was a master of the wry and the comic as much as of the tragically ephemeral)—all these things are described with a fierce and detailed intensity. Yet anything he describes is prevented from becoming overpowering by his cool self-awareness, his sense of the ridiculous and the posturing.

Then there are the people. One must not over-emphasise the shrewd, sometimes rather catty, snap judgments on the great and the unknown. The brilliantly perverse little portraits, of Edward Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson at one end of the scale and the many anonymous blanks at the other, loom too large in a general consideration; for Welch seems to have been extraordinarily self-sufficient, despite the obvious and necessary mental and material props given by such people as Eric Oliver and Noel Adenay. He says at one place in the Journals: "There is always this question with me, to be alone or not. Really, to be alone is my nature. If it were not so, I would not have been alone as much as I have." Yet his keen and candid eye despite professions of insecurity, embarrassment and suspicion, was one which was far from being mildewed with introversion or jaundiced with hypochondria; the child vision of objects included, or was extended to, a vision of people. Those who imagine Welch living in a world of cracked china teacups, ivory chess-men and signet rings will be surprised to see how many *people* he knew, and with what apparent ease he often met strangers. It is wrong to believe that the author of the Journals was entirely the same human being as the Denton of 'Maiden Voyage', the Orvil of 'In Youth is Pleasure', the Maurice of 'A Voice through a Cloud'. He was certainly not his grotesque self-parody, Andrew, in the story, 'The Diamond Badge.' Despite the child-vision, Welch was not a child when he wrote any of these books; he was a young man, between the ages of about 27 and 32, forced by temperament and disease to be as impulsively intense and as pitifully dependent as a child. That is, perhaps, the real tragedy: when all the beauty and vision of these books has been praised, there is still left the unformed personality and the wasted years, so that one is simultaneously moved

in reading them by the freshness of the eye and the little boy's anxiety, the easy, athletic writing and the crippled body. He says it most movingly here: "When you long with all your heart for someone to love you, a madness grows there that shakes all sense from the trees and the water and the earth. And nothing lives for you, except the long deep bitter want. And this is what everyone feels from birth to death."

—*Anthony Thwaite*

A Correct Compassion, and other poems, by James Kirkup
Oxford 8/6

THIS second volume of James Kirkup's verse contains several unpublished poems. In these, as in the earlier ones, the richness of poetic imagery is combined with a precision of observation; theme and image are consistent with the variety of forms. Mr. Kirkup's talent is pre-eminently pictorial. His poetry is a constant attempt to capture the colour and form of the moment:

> Time, deafened by the cold, in flakes as thin as ash
> Print weightless tracks.'

the swan

> 'Thunders down miles of darkness, like a stone,'

a bird trembles on the branch and bursts into song.

Only the experimental title poem, an account of mitral stenosis valvulotomy, is different. Painful and direct in its effort to fuse the aesthetic and scientific views, to embody a poetic thought in the rhythms of prose, it marks a significant departure from the vision of the other poems. More often (and more successfully) Mr. Kirkup sees his world in terms of the elements: summer dying into the bitter sadness of winter, light into the darkness of the wave. And it is a world polarized on a life-death axis; its change the eternal flux of decay and rebirth. Between the infinite and the mortal, loneliness confronts its mirror image-love.

> 'On a familiar, but strange nocturnal wandering
> In which so much was changed, we could not speak
> For the enchantment—that this city, once an evening
> Of ruins, lightless, lonely, should now be where we walk
> And know we are not ghosts, or visions in a glass;
> No more the victims of our own and vaster lonelinesses,
> But enterers at last into a house of grace.'

He sees humanity crouched pitifully against the flood:

> 'This evening, the town's whole holiday population wanders out of doors
> And cheers when the magic lamps go on again, along the bridge's empty stage.'

and outside, on the periphery, the dark sea and the wind waiting to envelope, to absorb all.

Mr. Kirkup has a sensitive ear as well as eye, and at the same time as he employs traditional forms, is not unaware of the dissonance

and atonal possibilities of modern music. Admittedly his technical achievement is sometimes marred by a too frequent emphasis on the compound adjective or an over-simplification of phrase; and the clever verbal juxtaposition ("our imperfect love's desire for perfect grace") is not always successful. Occasionally one is afraid that here is brilliant imagery and little more.

Nevertheless the most impressive quality of these poems is one of tone—in their preservation of a child-like wonder. Mr. Kirkup has been able to reconcile a realistic view of human error and a creative belief in innocence:

> 'But still the chain-crowned swan will swim
> Across the breathless waters in the wake
> Of light and still the sun will climb.'

—Joanna Semel

The Dark Side of Love, by John Smith
Hogarth 7/6

UNLESS love has for Mr. Smith some distant metaphysical significance his book is misnamed. With "If I could be what you being it despise," he touches the latent insecurity of all men, and his description of Andromache's suffering similarly absolves him from the charge of egocentricity suggested by his title. Seven poems are concerned with love, but seventeen wander from a gentle epitaph for a gardener to the crystallized exhilaration of "Walking on Stilts." And the love poems are the weakest of the book; they justify their classification as a "Minor Emotion"—the "Dark Side of Love" alone is violent and for violence's sake—and their echoes of Donne are spoilt either by a labouredly commonplace vocabulary or a long rhythm which lapses into monotony.

The other poems show a variety of metre and a lyricism which adapts itself effortlessly to a change of mood. The moon prophesies sombrely, soon will

> "all
> The flaming heart of autumn be a pyre,"

and optimistic man's answer is

> "Of laughing cities in the warmth of the fostering sun."

The imagery throughout is awake, and does not revel in incongruities. Hair "like a cloud of thunder" or "herring shoals of silver-fish leaves" linger on the ear.

The poems are short and only two ideas are elaborated, a religious and political conversation held by the moon with mankind, and five "time-poems", including "Because Time walks" and "How Tall Time Grows". Not merely lament and reminiscence, but an objective analysis of "the reluctant element", they are unusual, and, in time, no doubt, more of Mr. Smith's poetry will be of the same quality.

—Katherine Vine

SOME CONTEMPORARIES

Aesthetics, Seksaria Chambers 3rd Floor, 139 Medows St., Fort Bombay, India. Quarterly 1/6.

Contact, 28 Mayfield Ave., Toronto 3, Ontario, Canada. Quarterly $1. No. 4.

Nightwatchman, 30 Healey St., South Wigston, Leicester. Bi-annually 6d. Nos. 4 and 5.

Trace, 290 West End Lane, London, N.W.6. Tri-annually 9d.

THE number and scope of small reviews is larger and wider than the occasional reader might assume. Two of the first three magazines under review come to us from abroad, and all three taken together show an interesting variety of approach and content. Each, moreover, fulfils the most necessary condition for a little magazine—that it should have something definite to say.

Aesthetics embraces the visual, as well as the literary arts, and although the arts of India are its main theme, it has a world-wide interest. Most successful are the articles on dancing and the pictorial arts. The poems and other literary contributions in the current number show less quality, but *Aesthetics* as a whole has a sincerity and dedication which are impressive.

Visually striking, the Canadian *Contact*, with its emphasis on direct, and even violent communication, claims too much, perhaps, for the verse experiments of its contributors. Some of the poems are original and vigorously sustained, but few are moving or impressive in any deeper sense. Successful experiment, like the free verse in which many of these poems are written, requires control and consideration. Too many of these poems—exceptions are Miss Schoeberlein's and Mr. May's in this number—show no sign of such effort.

Nightwatchman, too, has a distinct theme. It stresses "constructive attitudes" in poetry, but steers clear of the spiritual pessimism which too often precedes them. Its keynotes are humanity, sensibility, and optimism. These are difficult demands for some poets, but the poems in Nos. 4 and 5 generally manage to live up to them. One criticism: Nightwatchman's beliefs and aims are admirable—why then (unless for reasons of space) no editorial in No. 5 to clarify them, as in the more successful No. 4?

All these, and many other little reviews, are included in *Trace*, which fully lists and classifies English-language magazines of all kinds and intentions in all parts of the world. As well as an invaluable guide for reader, writer and editor, this is heartening evidence of the variety and vitality of contemporary literary publications.

—*John Tobias*